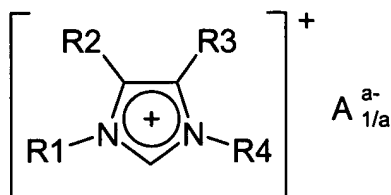


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-9 cancelled

10. (New) A process for preparing purified 1,3-substituted imidazolium salts of the formula (I)



(I),

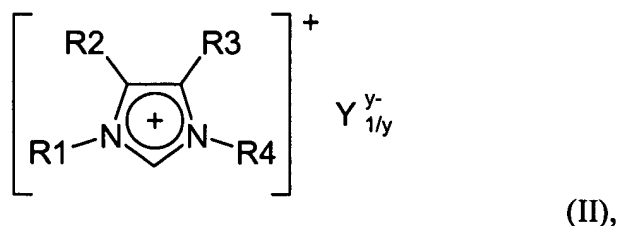
where

the radicals R^1 , R^2 , R^3 and R^4 are each, independently of one another, a carbon-comprising organic, saturated or unsaturated, acyclic or cyclic, aliphatic, aromatic or araliphatic radical which has from 1 to 30 carbon atoms and may comprise one or more heteroatoms and/or be substituted by one or more functional groups or halogens, where adjacent radicals R^1 and R^2 , R^2 and R^3 or R^3 and R^4 may also be joined to one another and the radicals R^2 and R^3 may each also be, independently of one another, hydrogen, halogen or a functional group;

and

A^{a-} is the partly or fully deprotonated anion of an inorganic or organic protic acid H_aA (III), where a is a positive integer and indicates the charge on the anion,

which comprises reacting a 1,3-substituted imidazolium salt of the formula (II),



where the radicals R^1 , R^2 , R^3 and R^4 are as defined above and

the anion Y^{y-} is the partly or fully deprotonated anion of an inorganic or organic protic acid

H_yY (IV),

where y is a positive integer and indicates the charge on the anion,

with a strong base at from 20 to 250°C while distilling off the 1,3-substituted imidazol-2-ylidene formed, wherein the 1,3-substituted imidazol-2-ylidene which has been distilled off is brought into contact in the gaseous state with the protic acid

H_aA (III)

and/or the 1,3-substituted imidazol-2-ylidene which has been distilled off is passed in the gaseous or condensed state into a receiver comprising the protic acid H_aA (III).

11. (New) The process according to claim 10, wherein the radicals R^1 and R^4 are each, independently of one another, methyl, ethyl, 1-propyl, 2-propyl, 1-butyl, 1-pentyl, 1-hexyl, 1-heptyl, 1-octyl, 1-nonyl, 1-decyl, 1-dodecyl, 1-tetradecyl, 1-hexadecyl, 1-octadecyl, 1-(2-ethyl)hexyl, benzyl, 3-phenylpropyl, 6-hydroxyhexyl or phenyl and the radicals R^2 and R^3 are each, independently of one another, hydrogen, methyl, ethyl, n-propyl, 2-propyl, 1-butyl, 1-hexyl, 6-hydroxyhexyl, phenyl or chlorine.

12. (New) The process according to claim 10, wherein the anion A^{a-} is

fluoride; hexafluorophosphate; hexafluoroarsenate; hexafluoroantimonate; trifluoroarsenate; nitrite; nitrate; sulfate; hydrogensulfate; carbonate; hydrogencarbonate; phosphate; hydrogenphosphate; dihydrogenphosphate; vinyl phosphonate; dicyanamide; bis(pentafluoroethyl)phosphinate; tris(pentafluoroethyl)trifluorophosphate; tris(heptafluoropropyl)trifluorophosphate; bis[oxalato(2-)]borate; bis[salicylato(2-)]borate; bis[1,2-benzenediolato(2-)O,O']borate; tetracyanoborate; tetracarbonylcobaltate;

tetrasubstituted borate of the formula (Va) $[BR^aR^bR^cR^d]^-$, where R^a to R^d are each, independently of one another, fluorine or a carbon-comprising organic, saturated or unsaturated, acyclic or cyclic, aliphatic, aromatic or araliphatic radical which has from 1 to 30 carbon atoms and may comprise one or more heteroatoms and/or be substituted by one or more functional groups or halogens;

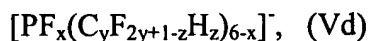
organic sulfonate of the formula (Vb) $[R^e-SO_3]^-$, where R^e is a carbon-comprising organic, saturated or unsaturated, acyclic or cyclic, aliphatic, aromatic or araliphatic radical which has from 1 to 30 carbon atoms and may comprise one or more heteroatoms and/or be substituted by one or more functional groups or halogens;

carboxylate of the formula (Vc)



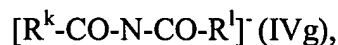
where R^f is hydrogen or a carbon-comprising organic, saturated or unsaturated, acyclic or cyclic, aliphatic, aromatic or araliphatic radical which has from 1 to 30 carbon atoms and may comprise one or more heteroatoms and/or be substituted by one or more functional groups or halogens;

(fluoroalkyl)fluorophosphates of the formula (Vd)

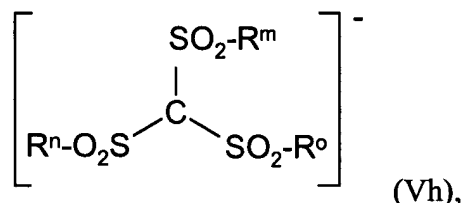


where $1 \leq x \leq 6$, $1 \leq y \leq 8$ and $0 \leq z \leq 2y+1$;

imide of the formula (Ve), (Vf) or (IVg)



where R^g to R^l are each, independently of one another, hydrogen or a carbon-comprising organic, saturated or unsaturated, acyclic or cyclic, aliphatic, aromatic or araliphatic radical which has from 1 to 30 carbon atoms and may comprise one or more heteroatoms and/or be substituted by one or more functional groups or halogens;
methide of the formula (Vh)



where R^m to R^o are each, independently of one another, hydrogen or a carbon-comprising organic, saturated or unsaturated, acyclic or cyclic, aliphatic, aromatic or araliphatic radical which has from 1 to 30 carbon atoms and may comprise one or more heteroatoms and/or be substituted by one or more functional groups or halogens;

organic sulfate of the formula (Vi) $[R^pO-SO_3]^-$, where R^p is a carbon-comprising organic, saturated or unsaturated, acyclic or cyclic, aliphatic, aromatic or araliphatic radical which has from 1 to 30 carbon atoms and may comprise one or more heteroatoms and/or be substituted by one or more functional groups or halogens; or

halometalate of the formula (Vj) $[M_qHal_r]^{s-}$, where M is a metal and Hal is fluorine, chlorine, bromine or iodine, q and r are positive integers and indicate the stoichiometry of the complex and s is a positive integer and indicates the charge on the complex.

13. (New) The process according to claim 12, wherein the radicals R^1 and R^4 are each, independently of one another, methyl, ethyl, 1-propyl, 2-propyl, 1-butyl, 1-pentyl, 1-hexyl, 1-

heptyl, 1-octyl, 1-nonyl, 1-decyl, 1-dodecyl, 1-tetradecyl, 1-hexadecyl, 1-octadecyl, 1-(2-ethyl)hexyl, benzyl, 3-phenylpropyl, 6-hydroxyhexyl or phenyl and the radicals R^2 and R^3 are each, independently of one another, hydrogen, methyl, ethyl, n-propyl, 2-propyl, 1-butyl, 1-hexyl, 6-hydroxyhexyl, phenyl or chlorine.

14. (New) The process according to claim 10, wherein the anion A^{a-} is tetrafluoroborate, hexafluorophosphate, trifluoromethanesulfonate, methanesulfonate, formate, acetate, mandelate, nitrate, nitrite, trifluoroacetate, sulfate, hydrogensulfate, methyl sulfate, ethyl sulfate, propyl sulfate, butyl sulfate, pentyl sulfate, hexyl sulfate, heptyl sulfate, octyl sulfate, phosphate, dihydrogenphosphate, hydrogenphosphate, propionate, tetrachloroaluminate, $Al_2Cl_7^-$, chlorozincate, chloroferrate, bis(trifluoromethylsulfonyl)imide, bis(pentafluoroethylsulfonyl)imide, tris(trifluoromethylsulfonyl)methide, bis(pentafluoroethylsulfonyl)methide, p-toluenesulfonate, bis[salicylato(2-)]borate, tetracarbonylcobaltate, dimethylene glycol monomethyl ether sulfate, octyl sulfate, oleate, stearate, acrylate, methacrylate, maleate, hydrogencitrate, vinyl phosphonate, bis(pentafluoroethyl)phosphinate, bis[oxalato(2-)]borate, bis[1,2-benzenediolato(2-)O,O']borate, dicyanamide, tris(pentafluoroethyl)trifluorophosphate, tris(heptafluoropropyl)trifluorophosphate, tetracyanoborate or chlorocobaltate.

15. (New) The process according to claim 13, wherein the anion A^{a-} is tetrafluoroborate, hexafluorophosphate, trifluoromethanesulfonate, methanesulfonate, formate, acetate, mandelate, nitrate, nitrite, trifluoroacetate, sulfate, hydrogensulfate, methyl sulfate, ethyl sulfate, propyl sulfate, butyl sulfate, pentyl sulfate, hexyl sulfate, heptyl sulfate, octyl sulfate, phosphate, dihydrogenphosphate, hydrogenphosphate, propionate, tetrachloroaluminate, $Al_2Cl_7^-$, chlorozincate, chloroferrate, bis(trifluoromethylsulfonyl)imide, bis(pentafluoroethylsulfonyl)imide, tris(trifluoromethylsulfonyl)methide, bis(pentafluoroethylsulfonyl)methide, p-toluenesulfonate, bis[salicylato(2-)]borate, tetracarbonylcobaltate, dimethylene glycol monomethyl ether sulfate, octyl sulfate, oleate, stearate, acrylate, methacrylate, maleate, hydrogencitrate, vinyl phosphonate, bis(pentafluoroethyl)phosphinate, bis[oxalato(2-)]borate, bis[1,2-benzenediolato(2-)O,O']borate, dicyanamide, tris(pentafluoroethyl)trifluorophosphate, tris(heptafluoropropyl)trifluorophosphate,

tetracyanoborate or chlorocobaltate.

16. (New) The process according to claim 10, wherein the anion Y^{y-} is chloride, bromide, methanesulfonate, hydrogencarbonate, carbonate, hydrogensulfate, diethylphosphate, tosylate or methyl sulfate.

17. (New) The process according to claim 15, wherein the anion Y^{y-} is chloride, bromide, methanesulfonate, hydrogencarbonate, carbonate, hydrogensulfate, diethylphosphate, tosylate or methyl sulfate.

18. (New) The process according to claim 10, wherein the 1,3-substituted imidazol-2-ylidene which has been distilled off is brought into contact in the gaseous state with gaseous protic acid H_aA (III) and the condensed, purified 1,3-substituted imidazolium salt (I) is isolated.

19. (New) The process according to claim 17, wherein the 1,3-substituted imidazol-2-ylidene which has been distilled off is passed in the gaseous state into a receiver comprising the protic acid H_aA (III) and the purified 1,3-substituted imidazolium salt (I) is isolated therefrom.

20. (New) The process according to claim 10, wherein the 1,3-substituted imidazol-2-ylidene which has been distilled off is condensed in a condenser, passed in the condensed state into a distillation receiver comprising the protic acid H_aA (III) and the purified 1,3-substituted imidazolium salt (I) is isolated therefrom.

21. (New) The process according to claim 19, wherein the 1,3-substituted imidazol-2-ylidene which has been distilled off is condensed in a condenser, passed in the condensed state into a distillation receiver comprising the protic acid H_aA (III) and the purified 1,3-substituted imidazolium salt (I) is isolated therefrom.

22. (New) The process according to claim 10, wherein the distillation is carried out at a pressure of from 0.0001 to 0.15 MPa abs.

23. (New) The process according to claim 21, wherein the distillation is carried out at a pressure of from 0.0001 to 0.15 MPa abs.